Basic principles for promoting organic farming in Japan (summary)

MAFF (The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) has made basic principles for promoting organic farming in Japan.

- Organic farming is an environmentally friendly and consumer’s needs oriented way of farming. Therefore, it is necessary to promote this method of farming further in Japan.
- On the other hand, compared to non-organic farming, this method can commonly cause lower yield and quality deterioration in crops. Understanding of organic farming by consumers and users is lacking, as are efforts to promote it.
- On the basis of this situation, MAFF has made basic principles on the fundamental issues for central and local governments to implement policy measures for promoting organic farming from the viewpoint of production, distribution and consumption.
- These principles are targeted from 2007FY to 2012FY. By explaining the meaning of the food self-sufficiency ratio and the factors and background of the decline of the ratio, the risk to rely too much on food importation, and menus which are possible to cook with domestically produced products and maximize calorie efficiency. The report says that the improvement of food self-sufficiency ratio leads to enhance food supply capability.

I  Basic points to promote the farming:
1. Establish and familiarize the technical system of the farming. Strengthen support measures for efforts in the farming as well as enhance application of these measures in order to facilitate the farming.
2. Make bridges between organic farmers, farm organizations, distributors, dealers, and consumers in order to help farmers and related personnel to engage actively on the production, distribution and sales of organic farm products.
3. Promote information on production, distribution, sales and consumption of the products and the proper labeling of organic products to help consumers access the products easily.
4. Promote interaction between organic farmers, related people and consumers through food education and activities which further local consumption of local food, farm studies and exchanges between urban and rural areas.
5. Try to reflect the opinions of organic farmers and related people to respect their initiatives as well as paying enough attention to avoid standardized approaches.

II  Issues in promoting and expanding organic farming
1. Concepts in setting a target
   - The target would be common to national and local governments, farmers, and consumers.
   - Considering the current situation where establishment of any technical system on organic farming is an issue, the target would stress establishing conditions to enable/facilitate farmers to start the farming.
2. Targets in promoting and expanding the farming
   (1) Develop and systematize technologies for organic farming.

III  Policy issues in promoting the farming
1. Supporting the farming
   (1) Support efforts for the farming
      - Certification of “Eco-farmer” and implement the measure for the preservation and improvement of farmland, water and environment
      - Promote measures for realizing regional agricultural development through the farming
   (2) Support people who are going to start/engage in the farming
      - Counseling and training to be provided in prefectural farming academies and agricultural pre-academies and private bodies. Give funding to promote the participation of youth in the farming.
   (3) Support the distribution and sales of organic
farm products
  • Utilize labeling rules, inspection and certification systems, JAS system and network catalogues on production and shipment information on the products.
  • Assist in establishing facilities for direct sales. Encourage information exchanges between consumers and farmers.

2. Promote technological development
(1) Promote R&D on the farming
  • Carry out demonstration experiments to understand the effectiveness of the introduction of technologies from private sectors and the conditions to introduce them.
  • Promote the R & D in a planned way by collaborating with the Incorporated Administrative Agency, prefectural governments, universities and research institutes of private sectors, by setting the goals of research issues such as scientific solutions of organic farming technologies which is necessary to promote the farming.
(2) Spread the results of R & D
  • Provide information on the results of the R&D and the operation of extension activities based on the Extension office.
  • Understand the farmer’s needs for the R&D of farming technologies and reflect the needs on the R&D.

3. Promote consumer’s understanding and interest in organic farming
  • Provide extension, enlightenment and information services to consumers, distributors and users and honor excellent organic farmers
  • Commend and provide information on good organic farming cases in private sectors.

4. Promote understanding between organic farmers and consumers
  • Promote efforts toward understanding in cooperation with food education, local production and local consumption movements. Provide training utilizing those with farming experience and enhance exchanges between rural and urban areas.
  • Award the good efforts in private sectors and provide information on their farming.

5. Research
  • Research trends in production, distribution, sales and consumption, development and extension of the technology and in cases display the efforts.

6. Support organic farming activities in private sectors
  • Provide necessary information, advice and guidance to private sectors and establish counseling countermeasures for them.
  • Provide assistance for good efforts in private sectors and award cases of good effort.

7. Support local governments by central government
  • Encourage prefectural governments into making organic farming promotion programs.
  • Provide guidance, advice and training to local governments which are going to make and implement policy measures on the farming.

IV Other issues necessary for promoting the farming
1. Make a cooperation system with related organizations and groups
(1) Prepare a cooperation system in the national and prefectural governments
(2) Prepare an organic farming promotion system
(3) Prepare an R&D system on technologies for the farming
2. Reflect on opinions of organic farmers, consumers and other related people on policy measures
3. Revise basic principles
  The ministry will keep a check on the time and the need for revision of the basic principles.

STATISTICS
The following statistics are available from the Statistics Planning Division of the Statistics Department (Tel. 03-3501-3710).
10. Summary of Survey on Trends in the Food Industry, 2006. (Implementation and Introduction of “System for Ensuring Food Safety” in the Food Retailers, such as a Traceability System utilizing IT equipment)

Reference: Documents in English are available at: http://www.maff.go.jp/esokuhou/index.html

Notes: 1. All materials are in Japanese unless otherwise noted.
  2. The contacts may not be able to respond to inquiries in any language except Japanese.